

Public Testimony for the Record by the  
**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS**  
Related to Appropriations by the  
**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR,  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION AND RELATED AGENCIES**  
Concerning the  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT**  
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On Behalf of the  
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## Summary

This testimony is submitted on behalf of The National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) on Fiscal Year 2011 appropriations for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), located within the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services.

This testimony will cover the following topics:

- Overview of the State-administered CSBG with particular focus on contributions to economic recovery efforts and job creation;
- The impact and results of CSBG projects, including examples of innovative programs around the country;
- Explanation of the States' administration of the block grant and recommendations on the best strategies to support them in this role; and
- A summary of CSBG requirements to preserve the progress that was made with Recovery Act funding in job creation and retention.

Chairman Obey, Ranking Member Tiahrt, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP), the premier national association representing state administrators of the Department of Health and Human Services' Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and state directors of the Department of Energy's Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program. I am Tunde Eboda, CSBG Administrator, Community Services Block Grant Program Office, D.C. Department of Human Services.

We thank Congress for its past support of CSBG and look forward to working with you to build on the success of the past year and to promote economic mobility for all Americans in the years ahead. We'd especially like to thank one of this nation's most ardent champions of vulnerable populations, Chairman Obey. Your support in promoting economic opportunity for all Americans reminds us of what this great nation is all about.

I planned to begin today by talking about CSBG's outcomes because there is a lot of good news to report—but first I want to talk about jobs. An economic recovery that doesn't restore employment opportunity to low-income workers so disproportionately hurt by the economic crisis isn't worth the paper it's reported on. I understand fully that resources are scarce, the need is greater than ever, and that this committee faces difficult choices. However, already this year CSBG created 8,000 jobs and provided critical supports that helped 22% of Americans in poverty stay employed or attain greater economic security. Federal recovery spending data ranks the Community Services Block Grant 12<sup>th</sup> out of approximately 200 federal programs in jobs created or retained. We dare not lose this momentum. To retain the jobs we've created and to maintain our success, we need \$300 million more than our previous year's CSBG allocation. Why are we asking for more? We're not. The total would still be 63% less than we received overall this year.

Experts agree that even as the economy begins to recover, those in the lowest income brackets will still have a hard time finding jobs for years to come. To sustain a recovery, all Americans need to participate in the economy. More than ever we must invest our scarce resources where they'll produce the most results. The funding we request will enable one of the Federal government's most successful economic mobility programs to meet the challenges of the current economic crisis and lay the foundation for a sustained recovery.

This year, with Recovery Act funds and regular CSBG combined, the CSBG Network has nearly \$1.6 billion in available funds. Without Recovery Act funds in Fiscal Year 2011, we will need an additional \$300 million to fund the CSBG so as not to reverse the progress we've made so far. Without this funding, many of the jobs we've created will simply disappear. These jobs not only benefit the workers, but also provide critical support services to local communities and help states better respond to the economic crisis. We cannot afford to reduce this critical program. We need to secure the progress we've made putting Americans back to work.

### **The States' Role in CSBG**

State responsibility and administrative oversight makes the CSBG successful. But States can only be as responsible and effective as they're allowed to be. The Block Grant allows the States

to ensure programs spend funds on time, finish on budget and achieve results. It provides States the flexibility to develop programs and services that meet the needs of their own unique demographics, geography and conditions.

Moreover, State CSBG administrators have a proven track record of effective partnering with other Federal and State programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and State funded Early Head Start Programs, and of leveraging additional resources to multiply the effectiveness of the CSBG funds.

States monitor their results and manage agencies using the Network's national accountability system because they know they are responsible for producing results and can't afford to fail. States are only mandated by the CSBG Act to monitor CSBG funded agencies once during a three year period, yet most States conduct more intensive oversight than the Act requires.

While the CSBG Act gives States the authority and flexibility they need to hold local agencies accountable and to respond in times of crisis, the success of the CSBG in Recovery Act jobs creation was achieved despite the dangerous lack of critical administrative funding. Any permanent reduction in State Administration allowances will weaken State oversight and reduce accountability at a time when Congress is focused on better investment of limited resources.

FY 2011 appropriations need to uphold the language of the CSBG Act, which allows States to administer the Block Grant effectively. States must be able to use up to 5% of the CSBG for State administrative expenses, such as monitoring, and the remaining funds, after grants are made to eligible entities, for building capacity, innovating programs and ensuring outcomes. Also, income eligibility needs to be maintained at the level established in the Recovery Act, which is 200% of poverty. Finally, States need the ability to recapture and redistribute unobligated funds distributed to an eligible entity if at the end of a fiscal year such funds exceed 20% of the total amount distributed.

For example, times of crisis highlight the terrible results of using appropriations to remove the States' authority. As we saw when Hurricane Katrina swept through the Gulf Coast, and as we're seeing now with the flooding in Tennessee and the oil spill in the Gulf, States can't respond as quickly and effectively as they're capable of doing when they no longer have the flexibility to move resources to where they're needed. FY2011 appropriations need to restore the full authority given the States by the CSBG Act.

## **About CSBG**

The CSBG is worth the additional \$300 million investment because it's the federal government's best resource for identifying and taking to scale innovations which make communities more economically competitive, equitable, and environmentally sustainable. The CSBG network:

- Combines deep local connections with a nationwide accountability structure that manages for outcomes, sustainability and scalability, and replicates successes beyond individual programs.
- Gives States the flexibility to design place-based programs suited to unique local conditions.

- Understands that moving people to economic security involves more than just getting people jobs. Those hardest hit by the economic downturn need comprehensive supports, like education, training and family-supporting wages.
- Leverages additional Federal, State, local and private funding to combine with the Block Grant dollars. In FY 2008, nearly \$598 million from CSBG supported the core activities of the State and local CSBG Network agencies. Every CSBG dollar was matched by \$5.96 from State, local and private resources.
- Has over 45 years of experience integrating a range of initiatives in areas such as education, energy, housing, and transportation.
- Has close connections to local communities and a track record of innovation and adaptability.

## CSBG SUCCESSES

In 1994, CSBG created the award winning Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system. ROMA captures the effectiveness of programs using goals and outcomes measures. Here are some of the network's nationally aggregated outcomes achieved by individuals, families and communities as a result of their participation in innovative CSBG programs during FY 2008:

**176,000** low-income participants got a job, obtained an increase in employment income or achieved "living wage" **employment** and benefits.

**856,000** low-income households achieved an increase in **financial assets** or financial skills.

**4.6 million Community opportunities** or resources were improved or increased for low-income people.

**1.2 million** low-income participants obtained supports which reduced or **eliminated barriers to employment**.

**3.3 million** infants, children, youth, parents and other adults participated in **developmental or enrichment programs** and achieved program goals.

**304,000** low-income people mobilized to **participate** in activities that support and promote their own well-being and that of their community.

**2.2 million** low-income vulnerable individuals maintained an **independent living** situation.

**16.1 million** low-income individuals and families received **emergency assistance**.

## HOW IT WORKS

Here are some examples from some of your own states of how States and local agencies use CSBG funds and CSBG Recovery funds:

### **Investing in the Future with Education and Skill Training in Minnesota, Maryland and DC**

- Community Action Duluth partnered with a local college to provide tuition assistance and supportive services that enabled low-income individuals to get a degree.
- United Communities Against Poverty, Inc. developed the first Green Jobs training and certification program to put low-income Prince George's County residents to work.
- United Planning Organization offered training and apprenticeship opportunities in green building and grounds maintenance to promote job-readiness for this growing field.

### **Helping People Get and Keep Employment in Wisconsin, Kansas, Montana, and Ohio**

- Couleecap, Inc. provided work related resources like tools, special clothing, transportation and even, when necessary, mortgage or rent payments to stabilize housing situations so families could maintain employment.
- Community Action, Inc. of Topeka created on-the job training, work experience and certification in high demand fields such as Commercial Driving and Child Development to increase economic security.
- District XII Human Resource Development Council operated a Summer Employment Program for youth that provided work experience and much-needed income while also beautifying and improving the community.
- Pickaway County Community Action provided on-the-job training in energy conservation and weatherization to move low-income workers into good paying contractor jobs in the community.

### **Critical Services during the Economic Crisis in Montana, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and California**

- Community Action Partnership of Northwest Montana provides multiple services all in one location, including legal services for housing; domestic violence and credit counseling; and public benefits enrollment.
- INCA Community Services, Inc. serves vulnerable families facing multiple complex barriers to employment. INCA coordinated numerous services to help stabilize these families so they could move beyond addressing basic needs and focus on employment.
- Lakeshore Community Action Program created a financial literacy counseling program that collaborated with a local consumer credit counseling agency to help low-income families make the most of their scarce resources.
- As a leader in their community, Community Action Partnership of Orange County provided technical assistance and capacity building to support other local community organizations in preparing for the increased community needs brought on by the economic crisis.

All of these agencies found that CSBG Recovery Act funds were critical to address the needs in their communities – these needs won't stop abruptly when Recovery Act funding ceases. CSBG is the core funding which holds together a local delivery system that responds effectively and efficiently to the needs of low-wage workers and the broader community. CSBG allows local agencies to develop local funding, private donations and volunteer services and run programs of far greater size and value than the actual CSBG dollars they receive.

**For every CSBG dollar they get, CAAs leverage \$5.96 in non-federal resources** (state, local, and private) to improve the economic security of low-wage workers and communities.

Since its inception, the CSBG has shown how partnerships between the federal government, states and local agencies benefit citizens in each state. The State CSBG office provides a critical connection to resources, knowledge of state-level and regional issues, partnership experience and a history of outcome measurement; all of which will make economic security and mobility projects highly successful.

## **WHOM DOES THE CSBG SERVE?**

CSBG serves a broad spectrum of low-income persons who aren't reached by other programs. Based on the most recently reported data from FY 2008, CSBG serves:

- More than **3.3 million** families with incomes at or below the Federal Poverty Guideline;
- More than **1.5 million** families in “severe poverty,” with incomes below 50% of the Poverty Guideline;
- More than **1.9 million** “working poor” families with wages or unemployment insurance;
- More than **1.3 million** families in which at least one family member was a retired worker;
- More than **425,000 families** receiving TANF—equal to **26%** of all TANF families; and
- More than **1.4 million** families headed by single mothers.

## **WHY INVEST IN CSBG**

The current financial crisis presents a significant opportunity for the nation. We must renew our commitment to invest in our most vulnerable citizens to create an economic recovery for all Americans. The CSBG Network represents our abiding national commitment to create hope and opportunity for all because we are a stronger nation when we do so. The CSBG and CSBG Network are a critical complement to the public sector's efforts to lift low-income Americans and their communities out of poverty and into economic independence.

Investing an additional \$300 million in CSBG for FY 2011 will maintain the economic mobility gains of the past year and allow us to move forward. Leaving behind millions of low-wage workers in a so-called recovery is not morally acceptable, nor in the end does it make for a sustainably strong economy. We can do better. We know what needs to be done. Our nation's future demands it.

Thank you so much, and I am now happy to take your questions.